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## Bush takes responsibility for Katrina relief problems

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DENNIS JOHNSON/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Staff Sgt. Johnny Salinas greets his family — from left, son Joel, 6; wife Maria; son Luis, 18 months; and daughter Fernanda, 8 — after returning from Iraq on Tuesday. Salinas was one of 80 soldiers from the 502nd Engineer Company who returned to Hanau, Germany, after a yearlong deployment in Iraq. Another 120 soldiers were slated to return Wednesday.

# Patriot Express flights to Mildenhall cut

## Citing restructuring and lack of ridership, Air Mobility Command to end route Oct. 1

By RON JENSEN

Stars and Stripes

RAF MILDENHALL, England — Air Mobility Command will eliminate the Patriot Express service to RAF Mildenhall after Oct. 1, citing customer preference for other means of travel as a main reason.

"We call it 'leakage' when customers who can use the flight use other commercial means," said Col. Torja Brichhouse, chief of the air transportation division at Scott Air Force Base, Ill.

She said this "leakage" is pushing a restructuring of the entire Patriot Express network, which has operated in some form since the 1960s, providing passenger service to 27 locations in the European Command, Central Command and Southern Command areas of responsibility.

By fiscal 2008, Brichhouse said, Patriot

Express will service areas only where commercial transportation is not available or security concerns are high, such as Naval Base Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, and Diego Garcia, saving \$67 million per year.

AMC is willing to lose money on the service if customers clamor for it, she said, but they seem to prefer the flexibility provided by commercial travel.

"The ridership issues have been going on for years," Brichhouse said in a telephone interview.

AMC has offered different routes and arrival times, changed aircraft to offer more leg room, upgraded the meals and other perks, but to no avail, she said.

"It's not just the money," she said. "It's 'What does the customer want?'"

The flight to RAF Mildenhall originates each Saturday in Baltimore and flies to England via Lajes Field in the Azores. It returns along that route on the same day.

People on permanent change of station or temporary-duty status soon will purchase commercial tickets through military channels, Brichhouse said.

They will travel on the daily shuttle buses from RAF Mildenhall and RAF Lakenheath to Heathrow or Gatwick airports south of London, a journey of about 100 miles, said Glenn Mitchell, operations manager for the 727th Air Mobility Squadron.

People who travel space-available on the Patriot Express will be most affected by the change. Mitchell said the Patriot Express mission almost always has a sizable number of space-available seats.

Waiting for those seats recently were Senior Airman Eric Jones, his wife, Carrie, and 3-month-old Gabriel, hoping to make the hop to Baltimore.

"I know a lot of people that come and

sign up for space-A," said Jones of the 48th Munitions Squadron at RAF Lakenheath. His wife said the cost would be \$1,550 on a commercial flight. The AMC mission would cost less than \$100.

Their young son, they said, would not fare well on one of the military flights that will still be available for space-available travel, forcing them to take commercial travel.

Service is also being eliminated this year to Osan and Kunsan air bases in South Korea; Kadena Air Base, Japan; and Keflavik, Iceland. Next year, the Patriot Express will disappear from Yokota and Misawa air bases and the Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, Japan.

In the final year of restructuring, service will end to Rota, Spain, and Aviano Air Base, Italy.

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## Gen. Bell visits Moscow to plan for joint training

Stars and Stripes

U.S. Army Europe Commander Gen. B.B. Bell is in Moscow this week to plan for next year's military exercises involving the United States and Russia.

Next year's exercise will be the third time the armies of the one-time bitter enemies have trained together.

Bell was to meet with Col. Gen. Alexei Maslov, commander of Russian Land Forces, to plan for the exercise named Torgau in recognition of the German city where Russian and U.S. forces came together as victors in the last days of World War II.

The first such exercise was in May 2004, at a Russian training facility near Moscow. It lasted a week and centered on commanders working as a combined staff to develop a plan to defend a fictional third country from attack.

It was the first time that Russia and the U.S. commanded an exercise together, according to Bob Puritman, a U.S. Army Europe spokesman.

The second exercise, last May, was larger and more involved. Ground forces were brought together to train, with a week in

Russia and another in Grafenwöhr, Germany.

U.S. soldiers from the 1st Armored Division operated T-72 tanks, fired Russian small arms, toured the Kremlin and tried the vodka. The Russian soldiers, in turn, drove Bradley fighting vehicles and marveled at how "high-tech" the U.S. weaponry was.

In recent years, Russian and American forces have worked together on peacekeeping missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and in Kosovo, but largely as separate entities.

The Torgau exercises were designed to develop contacts and build bilateral cooperation, Puritman said.

Bell was scheduled to visit headquarters of the Moscow and Leningrad military districts and the War History Museum of Armored Vehicles and Equipment in Kubinka near Moscow, according to media reports. His wife, Katie, was to visit a secondary school attended by Russian officers' children and meet with the wives of officers from the Moscow military district.

They were also scheduled for sightseeing tours of Moscow and St. Petersburg.



PHOTOS BY DENNIS JOHNSON/Courtesy of the U.S. Army

Spc. Jared Medrano is reunited with his 2-year old son, Jaden. Medrano was one of some 80 soldiers of the 502nd Engineer Company who returned Tuesday to Hanau, Germany, after a yearlong deployment.

## 502nd Engineers return home

Stars and Stripes

HANAU, Germany — For the nearly 200 soldiers of the 502nd Engineer Company, a very long year has come to an end. In the early morning hours of Tuesday, the soldiers stepped off of planes at Rhein-Main Air Base and onto buses that delivered them to their waiting families. Around 80 soldiers arrived early Tuesday, while the remainder were to arrive Wednesday.

The 502nd, part of the 130th Engineer Brigade, is the first U.S. Army Europe unit to complete a second tour of duty in Iraq, officials said. The unit is based at Pioneer Barracks in Hanau.

After a weeklong reintegration program, the soldiers will be granted 30 days of block leave before getting back to work in Germany.



More than 80 Soldiers from the 502nd Engineer Company march to the gym on Pioneer Kaserne, Hanau, after returning to Germany on Tuesday from a yearlong deployment in Iraq.

The 502nd first served in Iraq from March to October 2003, mainly in the Baghdad area. Its second deployment, which

began on Sept. 13, 2004, included time at Tallil Air Base and Logistics Support Area Anasoda in Balad.

## Ramstein Welfare Bazaar kicks off Thursday

KAISERSLAUTERN, Germany — There are only 101 days left until Christmas. And if you want to get that shopping done early, a good place to start is this week's huge bazaar at Ramstein Air Base.

The 41st annual Ramstein Welfare Bazaar — sponsored by the 435th Services Squadron and the Ramstein Officers' Spouses Club — begins Thursday and runs until Sunday.

More than 140 vendors, offering everything from Polish pottery to Turkish rugs, will set up shop in Hangars 1 and 2, according to the bazaar's Web site at: [www.ramstein-bazaar.org](http://www.ramstein-bazaar.org). The bazaar also will feature live entertainment and 40 food vendors.

Hours are noon to 8 p.m. Thursday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, and 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sunday. You must have a U.S. or NATO forces identification card to enter. Pets are not allowed.

Vendors accept Master Card and Visa, but payment will only be in U.S. dollars.

Proceeds from the event go toward dozens of organizations in and around the Kaiserslautern community, according to a press release from the Ramstein Officers' Spouses Club.

From Stars and Stripes